



For Immediate Release
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De La Torre Bill Gives Green Light for Parks in Urban Areas

Assembly Bill 521 passed with Bipartisan Support, advances to the State Senate

Sacramento, Calif. – In an effort to green urban cities across the State, Assemblymember Hector De La Torre (D-South Gate) introduced Assembly Bill 521 that will ease the development of recreational parks and open space on utility rights-of-way at an affordable rate. The bill passed the Assembly floor with bipartisan support and a vote of 64 to 10.

Urban communities, including the Southeast cities in Los Angeles County, lack the public health, environmental, economic, and social benefits that come with having ready access to parks and open space. In these cities, only one out of four residents lives within 440 yards of a neighborhood playground or park facility. There are even fewer parks and open spaces in low-income neighborhoods where a third of an acre, the equivalent of 30 yards on a football field, is shared by 1,000 people.

Assembly Bill 521 will create the necessary green space and reduce environmental heat. This legislation will help increase property values, and provide critical recreational opportunities for families in densely populated communities.

“AB 521 will increase the amount of parks and green space in urban communities,” said Assemblymember De La Torre. “It’s a commonsense approach that allows the California Public Utilities Commission to work with local governments to better serve their mutual constituents. It allows the PUC to take into consideration the community benefits of parks and open space when determining a fair lease rate for city parks under power lines.”

In 2002, the City of Bellflower received a grant to create Riverview Park as a secondary use of a utility right-of-way. Bellflower currently owns 6 acres and needed to lease an additional 12 acres from the utility to create a local park. The park will run along the San Gabriel River and will increase the City of Bellflower’s park space by about 24%.

Currently, when utility companies lease land that is part of its transmission and distribution right-of-way, it must first get approval from the California Public Utilities Commission for both the intended use and the rent that it will charge.

"Millions of Californians across the state don't have access to park space in their community, particularly in low-income areas," said Rico Mastrodonato, the Senior Government Relations Manager with the Trust For Public Land. "Passing AB 521 will give thousands of kids places to play, will bring more green space to our urban areas and will contribute to a healthier California."

The bill is supported by the City of Bellflower, The Trust for Public Land, the California Council of Land Trusts, the California League of Conservation Voters, Green California, Sierra Club, and Southern California Edison.

AB 521 moves to the State Senate for further consideration.

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